

7.
The Nature and Duty of Compassion.

A 1026. f. 6.
7.
S E R M O N

PREACHED AT THE
Parish-Church of *St. Chad, Salop;*
BEFORE THE
T R U S T E E S
OF THE
SALOP INFIRMARY,

On *Thursday* the 10th Day of *September*, 1761.

Published at the Request of the Trustees.

By RICHARD DOVEY, M. A.
Prebendary of *Lichfield*, and Rector of
Martin's in Birmingham.

S A L O P:

Printed by J. COTTON, and J. EDDOWES:

And sold for the Benefit of the CHARITY, by
T. LONGMAN, in *London*, R. BAILEY in *Lich-*
field, Mess. PEARSON and ARIS in *Birmingham*, and
B. HASLEWOOD in *Bridgnorth.*

THE NEW YORK

LIBRARY

TRUST

OF THE

OF THE

RICHARD LOVELL

AND

T O
THE RIGHT REVEREND;
F R E D E R I C K
L O R D B I S H O P
O F
Lichfield and Coventry,
T R E A S U R E R,
And the rest of the
T R U S T E E S
O F T H E
Salop I N F I R M A R Y,
The following DISCOURSE
Is humbly inscribed
By the
A U T H O R.

TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
FREDERICK
LORD BISHOP
OF
Richmond and Coventry
TREASURER

And the rest of the
TRUSTEES
OF THE
Salo-Infirmary

The following Discourse
Is humbly intended

By the
Author.

ROMANS xii. 15.

*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and
weep with them that weep.*

THE Passions or Affections of the Mind being the great Springs of human Action, to guide and direct these in the choice and pursuit of their true Objects is the principal Office of Reason and one great end and aim of Religion itself. While these are kept within due bounds, and Reason preserves it's sovereignty in the Mind, the Man may be said to be Master of himself. He enjoys Peace and Harmony in his own Breast, and is in the best manner disposed for all the Offices of Society. It is certain that the Passions are implanted in us, and made a part of

of our Constitution by God himself, and therefore whatever some Philosophers may have suggested to the contrary, we may conclude that they were given us for useful Purposes, and that it is not our Duty to eradicate or suppress them, but to moderate the force and direct the Tendency of them. They are necessary to our own well-being, and to quicken us in the Duties of Humanity and Benevolence to others. When we are led by Nature to sympathize with our Fellow-Creatures, when our good Affections

Heb. x. 24. *provoke us to Love and to good Works, to serve each other gladly, to rejoice in the Prosperity and to bear a part in the Adversity of others; when, I say, our social Passions take this Direction, it is not only innocent and right to indulge them, but this indulgence is recommended and inculcated in the Precept which we are going to consider, Rejoice, saith the Apostle, with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

In treating upon which words, it will be for the honour of our Religion to observe in the first place, that it does
not

not require from us a gloomy joyless Severity, that is at variance with the world and all things about it; it nowhere encourages a monastick Solitude or Retirement from Society : but on the contrary gives free Scope for the exercise of our social and benevolent Affections, and permits us every pleasure that is rational and worthy of our Nature. As God hath *given us all things richly to enjoy*, so this Enjoyment implies a degree of complacency in the good things of Life ; and this complacency is a Debt we owe, and when well temper'd and directed is in some sort an act of Praise and Thanksgiving to our benevolent and adorable Creator. We are commanded to *rejoice evermore*, that is, to be chearful and easy in all the circumstances of Life, under a pious Trust and confidence in the Goodness of God, and a certain assurance that all things will in the end *work together for Good, to those that love him*. Again, as God has formed us for Society, so he has made Society contribute many ways to the Joy and Happiness of Mankind ; and as we are enjoined to contribute our share

1 Tim.
vi. 17.

1 Thesa.
v. 16.

Rom. v.
13.

The Nature and Duty of Compassion.

share, so we are allowed to take our part in the pleasures which arise from this mutual intercourse with each other.

Rom.
xii. 10.
1 Cor.
xii. 25.

We are commanded to be *kindly affectioned* and to *have the same care one for another*; to make the Interests of our Neighbour our own; to take a kind part in his Prosperity as well as to share in and commiserate the Adversity of others.

It may perhaps be thought less necessary to inculcate this as a Duty, since Joy is ever welcome to the Heart of Man, and we are ready enough to improve every Opportunity of taking it to ourselves. It may therefore be necessary in the second Place to observe, that the Rejoicing which is made a Duty in the Text, is totally different, not only from the riotous and tumultuous Joys which arise from Intemperance and Excess, but from that more innocent exultation which we often feel, and are always seeking, from the recreations and amusements of Life. It is a Joy of a purer and more exalted nature, arising from the most generous and publick Spirit, from our Affec-
tion

The Nature and Duty of Compassion.

tion to the Good of others, and the Interest we take in their Happiness and Prosperity. This, however natural and rational it may appear, is to be found only in the best Minds, and is one of the best Proofs we can give of what is called emphatically a good Heart. In the present depraved state of Mankind, there are many malevolent Principles which counteract this pleasing Affection, and lead us, if not sometimes to rejoice in the Misfortunes of others, rather to murmur and repine, than to rejoice at their Prosperity and Success. Too often do we see that Envy preys where Joy should reign; and that, even while the Mouth is filled with congratulations, the Heart overflows with Chagrin and Jealousy.

It is against this envious contracted Spirit, that the Precept in the Text is directed, which calls upon us to extend our good-will without reserve to all Mankind; to make the Happiness of all the Object of our Wishes and Endeavours, and of consequence to rejoice at any good that befalls them. This is a part of that Charity which *envieth not*, I Cor. and xiii. 4, 5.

B

The Nature and Duty of Compassion.

and seeketh not her own. Men are apt to confine this Virtue in their conceptions of it to the relieving the wants of the Indigent, and succouring the Distressed. But it is certain that where this Principle is rooted in the Heart, it will lead us equally to rejoice in the happiness of the prosperous, and to pity the sufferings of the afflicted. The same Love of the Brethren, which delights in relieving those that are in want, will naturally take pleasure in seeing those wants more richly supplied by the bounty of Heaven. Hence in the same Chapter with the Text, it is made a part of brotherly Love, *in honour to prefer one another.* And we are frequently reminded, that as we are Members one of another, as we are united under Christ our head in one Body, we ought *if one Member suffers to suffer with it, and as well if one Member be honoured to rejoice with it.*

v. 10.

I Cor.
xii. 26.

This christian Spirit is not more necessary to the Peace and Happiness of Society than it is to our own, by removing from us all Discontent, evil Surmisings, and Jealousies, and enabling

ling us to enjoy the good things that are before us without repining at those which we want. And the contrary Temper, as our irregular Passions usually do, carries its own punishment along with it; by raising up within us a number of unnecessary Evils which have no existence but in our own thoughts, and are merely imaginary. An increase of Honour, Character, or Fortune to another does not usually lessen or impair our own. If others succeed beyond their Deserts, our own Merit is still the same. It is therefore our own Fault, and a punishment inflicted by our own Folly, if we refuse to enjoy the pleasures that are in our power, merely because they are more enjoyed by others.

The Disingenuity and Meanness of this Temper is sufficiently seen in the common practise and behaviour of Mankind. Men are obliged by Decency to express their Regard for each other, and are therefore liberal enough in their professions of Joy on the Success and good Fortune that attend them. It is then sure a Duty to plant in the Heart those Sentiments which we are obliged

to carry in our Mouth. And if we expect on every Accession of Happiness to receive these Congratulations from those we converse with, we should be ready to pay the same with sincerity ourselves.

Again, this unhappy Temper is injurious to the Goodness and Justice of God, who *giveth to all Men liberally*, and even on the meanest has bestowed more than he deserves, or has a right to expect. If therefore, He dispenses to one ten Talents, and to another only two, shall our *Eye be evil because God is Good*? Is he not at liberty to diversify his Gifts in what manner and in what proportion his Wisdom thinks fit? And shall we not rather thankfully enjoy what he hath of his free Grace bestowed upon us, than repine at the Advantages which he hath given to others.

Mat. xx.
15.

To this agreeable Duty then we are called by Nature, Interest, and even Decency itself. But the present occasion leads me rather to consider the latter part of the Text which enjoyns us to cultivate and indulge the same natural Sympathy with

with the afflicted and distressed. *Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.*

The numberless Calamities to which this mortal Life is continually subject furnish us with very frequent occasions for this sort of Compassion. If we look into ourselves, or round about in the World, we shall see assaulting Men on every side a Variety of Troubles which they can neither by Prudence prevent, nor have strength enough to repel. *Man Job v. 7. is born to trouble.*—This is the common Lot of Humanity. But Men are likewise born and formed to assist defend and relieve each other; to share with each other and alleviate the common Burdens and Calamities of Life. And this Comfort and Aid, which we are excited almost irresistibly to lend, few pass so prosperously thro' Life as not to want at some time in some way or other themselves. Different as the several Ranks and Conditions of Life are, higher and lower, richer and poorer, there are none that can exempt us from the common Calamities of Life, and all are exposed to some that are peculiarly their own. If
the

the vain Man be tempted by his Prosperity to say, *I shall never be cast down, there shall no harm happen unto me,* the least Experience will teach us that such Confidence is ill grounded, and that He may soon come in Misfortune like other Folk. Sickness and bodily Infirmities fall indiscriminately on all: But Loss and Disgrace are chiefly incident to great Possessions, and elevated Stations. And the higher the Rank, and the more affluent the Circumstances are, the more are they exposed to these traverses of Fortune, and the more heavily are they usually felt when they happen. On the other hand, People of inferior Condition and in lower Life, if they be less subject to the injuries of Fame or Fortune, are yet perhaps more exposed to Sufferings from Sickness, Pain, and the common Accidents of Life. And when deprived of the Blessing of Health and consequently disabled from providing for themselves and their Families, Poverty must attend their Misfortune and add to their Misery.

From the highest to the lowest Stations of Life we may find Objects for our
Pity

Pity and Compassion, and have occasion to *weep with them that weep*. The Rich may be afflicted in his turn, and the Poor may feel with him; may not only put up his Prayers and ardent Wishes for his Relief, but may sometimes contribute an acceptable Service towards it. But much oftener will this Duty be demanded from the Rich and Opulent to the Brother of low degree. The Poor are more in number and are more liable to Accidents from without, if not to Maladies within. The Rich have it always in their power to relieve these. When they are themselves attacked by Disease or Pain, every Relief that can be had is in their power: whereas the Poor in the like circumstances are often destitute not only of the conveniences but even of the necessaries of Life. Whatever then our Sufferings suggest to us as ministring Ease or Comfort in any calamitous Case, that Pity should incline us to wish, and to the best of our power provide for others in the like Distress.

For I need not observe that the Precept in the Text requires from us
an

an active Pity, which is industrious in relieving those Wants which it compassionates, and does not rest in the empty and fruitless expressions of Sorrow and Concern. *If a Brother or*

- ii. 5. *Sister, says St. James, be naked or destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them depart in peace, be you warmed or filled, notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful for the Body: what doth it*

John
c. 11.

profit? When Martha and Mary wept for the Death of a beloved Brother, Jesus also wept with them. He condescended to this natural Expression of Grief: but he suffered not his sense of their Distress to stop here. His compassion led him to exert a most signal Act of his almighty power in their favour: He raised Lazarus from the dead. A similar Instance of Compassion he shewed to the Widow of Nain upon the loss of her Son. And the well known Parable of the good Samaritan which carries so much force and conviction along with it, seems purposely designed to convey this moral Instruction, and to be expressly pointed there-

Luke
x. 39.

as most striking text in the Bible to
na

to by our Lord himself in his application of it, *Go and Do thou likewise.* The Duty then of Compassion is not satisfied by our weeping only, or condoling with our Neighbour under affliction: we must demonstrate the reality of our Concern for him by readily affording him all the assistance which his Circumstances require and our Situation will allow.

Luke
x. 39.

To proceed, if Men in the lower classes of Life are by their Circumstances made to depend for help on the Rich, the Rich are in point of Interest, if I may not say of Gratitude, bound to relieve them in Distress. The industrious Poor are certainly a most useful Part of the Community. They are at least as necessary to the Rich as the Rich are to the Poor. *The King himself*, says *Solomon*, *is served by the Field.* And *without these*, says the Son of *Sirach*, speaking of Agriculture and the mechanick Arts, *cannot a City be inhabited.* It is to these that the Rich owe all the Ornaments and Elegancies of Life: so that the Poor may be said in some sort to be *their* Benefactors.

Eccles.
v. 9.

C

And

And they have sure a right in return to expect the necessities of Life from those who by their Skill and Labour are clothed and fed, and enabled to fare sumptuously every day.

And sure what is thus bestowed is in point of present pleasure not misapplied. If change of Pleasure increases Delight, such a Gift purchases a most pleasing Variety. Benevolence is a Passion which demands as well as others due Gratification. It is so deeply rooted in us, that whenever a proper Object presents itself, I will say, not one of us can reject it without giving Pain, and doing a sort of violence to himself. So just is the Observation of the wise Man, *the merciful Man doth good to his own Soul, but He that is cruel troubleth his own Flesh.*

Prov.
xi. 16.

And now what nobler Field for the exercise of your Benevolent and kind Affections can possibly be opened, than this which here offers itself before you? An Institution designed to relieve those who are in the deepest Distress; who are the least able to help themselves; and who from their usefulness to the Publick

The Nature and Duty of Compassion.

lick are best intitled to the publick Care. And as this Charity has the noblest End for its Object, so is this End answered by it in the best and most perfect manner. The Poor have here every Advantage of Diet, Medicine, Attendance and Skill in much higher perfection than they could hope to procure either of them singly; and instead of languishing on the Bed of Sicknes in want of all the necessaries of Life, have here all the Conveniences that Wealth itself can procure for the Rich. And the Success of these Institutions has been every way answerable to the high Expectations which it was reasonable to form of them; the best Testimony that can be given to, and the most unanswerable Argument for their universal Use and Benefit.

Let then brotherly Love continue. May this happy Union of Love and Charity which has hitherto supported a Design so worthy and excellent, still subsist; and acquire new Strength by a general Concurrence of all that are able to assist in it: that its Influence may reach as far as the wants of our suffering

Neighbours, and extend to all around us. By opening the Hand and Heart in support of this good Work we shall in deed and effect fulfill the Precept of the Apostle, and in the best manner sympathize with them that weep.

Our Benevolence thus exerted will, besides the primary intention answered by it, produce many other pleasing Effects. It cannot but excite the warmest and most active Gratitude in those who reap the Benefit and feel the kindly Influence of it. And it will silence the complaints of the envious and malevolent; who are apt to look with an evil Eye on all that is above them, and to depreciate the Merit of those whom they think happier in the advantages of Life than themselves. When they see this envied Greatness tempered with Goodness, and made amiable by Bounty, they will be easily led to fulfill the former part of the Apostle's Advice, by *rejoicing with them that do rejoice.*

Attention to these Charities will be of signal Use to the Rich, and those that are at ease, in reminding them of the various

various Casualties to which Mankind in general are subject. It is sometimes better to go to the House of Mourning, than to the House of Feasting: if the Scenes of Affliction which we there meet with lead us, as their natural Tendency is, from reflecting on the uncertainty of human Life, and of all things here below, to set our Affections on things above, and to lay up our Treasure in Heaven. Happy is it to learn from the Experience of others, the Miseries to which this mortal State is subject: and happy should we think it, if we escape these Evils ourselves, to have the Opportunity which is here afforded us, of paying so suitable a Thank-Offering for it to Heaven.

Eccles.
vii. 11.

Again, if it be the greatest Blessing attending Riches to have the power of blessing others, what greater Blessing can the most benevolent Mind wish to bestow, than that of Health and Ease to the distressed and tortured; to restore them to their Families and Friends, to their Strength and Labour, to a comfortable Subsistence, and the Service of the Common-Wealth? What human Bliss can be supposed to exceed the satisfaction

Job
xxix. 12.

tisfaction of Job's Mind, when the Blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, upon him who was Eyes to the blind, and Feet to the lame, who was a Father to the Poor, and caused the Widows Heart to sing for Joy?

Another Advantage accruing to the Rich from this species of Charity is, that hereby the Science and Practice of Medicine in all its Branches is plainly advanced to greater perfection. Variety of Cases must furnish new matter of Observation, which the Acuteness of the Professor will not fail to make the best use of, in improving his Judgment and Skill. Frequent Experience will not only make him more exact in Knowledge, but more ready in the Application of it: and therefore the Rich in all cases of Accident to Body or Limbs may be hence supplied with more effectual help than probably they otherwise could be. So that they are really in some sort providing for themselves against the time of Need, whilst they are thus providing for the Poor.

Let

Let me only add in further Commendation of the Charity which is the present Subject of Discourse, that although it is chiefly intended for the Care and Cure of the Body, yet it does not neglect the Soul. It means to dismiss the Patients better Christians as well as abler Men. The Disorders of the Mind are here applied to, as well as those of the Body. And when this succeeds, as we may expect it often will, where the Patient is regularly called and habituated to the offices of Piety, has the best Instructions put into his Hands, and is made by Affliction more susceptible of good impressions; this is the greater Benefaction, the nobler Cure of the two: as it's salutary effects terminate not in the present Life, but reach out into Eternity.

In conclusion let us consider a little more closely how we are in the present case affected by our religious Profession. From the knowledge of our Creation we learn that God Almighty *hath made of one Blood all Nations*

Acts
xvii. 26,

tions of Men for to dwell on the Face of all the Earth, and thence clearly infer an universal Relation of Mankind by Nature. But Christianity draws this Tie much closer. It teaches us to regard every Man as our Neighbour, and every Christian as our Brother. We are not allowed to despise or neglect the meanest of our Fellows. On the contrary, we are commanded to be kindly affectioned towards all Men, and to yield them our ready Help, whenever their occasions call for it. Christians are taught to look upon themselves as still more closely united. We are one Body, one mystical Body in Christ; and as such are strictly combined in one common Interest to each other. The mutual Obligations flowing from this Combination, St. Paul elegantly and strikingly illustrates by the Analogy of a human Body and its several Parts. Herein he observes nothing is found superfluous or unuseful. The whole is so perfect, so well disposed and connected, that no one part from the highest to the lowest can well subsist without the other. *The Eye cannot say to the*

the Hand, I have no need of thee ; nor again the Head to the Feet, I have no need of you. Nay much more those Members of the Body which seem to be more feeble are necessary. Every Part in its proper Place and Office is serviceable to the Well-being of the whole: and in return derives some benefit and assistance from every other. It is natural therefore and necessary, as I have observed, that they should sympathize with each other, and whether one Member suffers or be honoured, all the Members should suffer or rejoice with it. God hath vouchsafed to form this mystical Body in Christ, and he hath appointed and encouraged the best of our Affections to nourish and strengthen it. For we are taught of God to love one another. The love of God himself as our Creator and Father will lead us to acknowledge and cherish our Christian Brethren as his Sons, and for his Sake. And sure the love of Christ will constrain us to love those who bear so near a Relation to him, as the Members of his mystical Body. Especially when he hath made this his peculiar Commandment, and the Badge of our Profession

1 Cor.
xii. 21.

1 Thess.
iv. 9.

2 Cor.
v. 14.

feſſion as Chriſtians, that we love one another as he hath loved us, and hath further condeſcended to make the Poor his Representatives here, to receive at our Hands that Tribute of Love and Gratitude which we owe him, by aſſuring us that whatever Kindneſs is beſtowed upon them, He will conſider as done to himſelf, and will place it to his Account. — And laſtly, to add every Motive that can be afforded to this Duty, hath made this expreſs Promise to every one that pays this Attention to his ſuffering Brethren. — *Thou*

Luke
xiv. 14. *ſhalt be bleſſed. For they cannot recompenſe thee: Thou ſhalt be recompenſed at the Reſurrection of the Juſt.*

If this ſeem a Motive of mean, and mercenary Conſideration to any one, let it be remembered that it is ſuch an one as our gracious Lawgiver, who beſt knew what was in Man, hath thought fit to urge; and therefore ſuch as we may ſafely apply to ourſelves and own the Influence of without any diſparagement to our Virtue. Philoſophers may boaſt of their own diſinteredneſs, of the powers of Reaſon
and

and the independence of Virtue. We profess ourselves Servants of a Master, whose Laws are indeed *holy and just, and good*, and his Service the most perfect Freedom: but who is likewise a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, and permits us to have respect unto this recompence of Reward. To the other Motives of Virtue let us then add the Encouragement of his gracious Promises and with these hopes before us persevere chearfully in the Discharge of every Duty, particularly in this *Labour which proceedeth of Love*, being assured that God will not forget your Works, and the Love which ye have shewed towards his Name, who have ministered unto the Saints and yet do minister. Amen.

Heb.
xi. 6.
xi. 26.

Heb.
vi. 10.

F I N I S

SERMONS upon the same Occasion,
sold for the Benefit of the Charity by
J. COTTON, and J. EDDOWES in *Shrews-*
bury, and Mess. PEARSON and ARIS in
Birmingham.

I. **T**HE *Precminence of Charity*, preached
October 1, 1747, by Dr. HORBERY.

II. *Perseverance in Well-doing*, preached
September 14, 1749, by Dr. ADAMS.

III. *The Christian Strife, or Emulation in
good Works, recommended*, preached September
19, 1751, by Mr. BINNELL.

IV. *St. Paul's Doctrine of Charity*, preached
September 6, 1759, by Mr. REYNOLDS.

Where may be had,

*Dr. ADAMS's Answer to Mr. HUME's Essay
on Miracles. The Second Edition. Price 1 s.*

And his Sermon on the Nature and Obliga-
tion of Virtue. Price 1 s.

Select Portions of the Singing Psalms for the
Use of Churches. The Third Edition, price
6 d. bound.

£
6.
9